

THE MESSINGER



OF OUR LADY OF AFRICA

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DAVIS

CONGREGATION
OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS
OF OUR LADY OF AFRICA
(White Sisters)

ORIGIN AND AIM: The Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa was founded in 1869 by Cardinal Lavigerie, to rescue, moralize and regenerate the pagan and Mohammedan woman, and through her attain the family and society. Exclusively vowed to the Apostolate in Africa, the Sisters devote their lives to the natives in every work of mercy and charity . . . Catechetical, Medical, Educational.

GOVERNMENT AND APPROBATION:

The Congregation is governed by a Superior General who depends directly on the Holy See. The Constitutions were definitely approved by decree the 14th of December 1909 and promulgated on the 3rd of January 1910.

SPirit: The Spirit of the Congregation is one of obedience, humility, simplicity, and zeal; and the life of the Sisters one of poverty, mortification and labor.

* * * *

The Congregation numbers over 1,500 Professed Sisters who are devoting their lives to the Natives in 120 Missions, that spread out through—

North Africa: Algeria, Tunisia, Atlas Mountains, Sahara.

West Africa: The Gold Coast, French West Africa.

East Africa: Kenya, Nyassaland, Tanganyika, Uganda, Rhodesia, Belgian Congo, Rwanda, Urundi.

* * * *

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SPIRITUAL ADVANTAGES

Three Masses are said monthly for the living and deceased benefactors of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. Moreover, they share in the prayers and apostolic labors of over fifteen hundred White Sisters, who are working in the African Missions; and in the prayers and acts of self denial that the Natives, so willingly, offer up daily for their benefactors.

**TO AVOID THE MISSIONS
UNNECESSARY EXPENSE,**

kindly notify us immediately of a change of address. If you do not, the postal authorities will tax us for their notification.

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White Sisters on the Dark Continent

THERE can be no Christian society without a Christian family, and there can be no Christian family without Christian parents. Even though the faith of the men of a nation might be great, it is not enough unless it is accompanied by a true religious and moral sense, and by the piety of the women as practiced in their daily life. These truths the great Cardinal Lavigerie recognized from the beginning of his work in Africa. That is why the day he founded the White Fathers to teach the dark skinned natives of this unknown continent, he decided to join to them a society of nuns to work with them, expressly to teach the women. The White Fathers were founded in 1868 and the White Sisters in 1869.

Degradation of the Natives

The pagan society which these messengers of the Cardinal contacted were found to be under more deplorable conditions than could be imagined in Algiers: cruelty of the chiefs, slavery, immorality, laziness, the degeneration of the women who existed solely for the pleasure of their masters . . . This idolatrous nation laboring under so much misery made, for the native women, a destiny so low that, it is not exaggerated to say, she had lost her human dignity and all moral obligations. A woman from the brush would have been astonished if, going with a neighbor to the well for water or in search for wood on the hillside, she would have encountered Jesus, and He would have spoken to her as He did to the Samaritan at the well of Jacob.

Degeneration of the Women

How would a handful of inexperienced young missionaries ever be able to rectify such social and moral disorder? If among the Moslems of Algiers the severe confinement of the women to their homes and to the sole conversation of their husbands, not being allowed to speak to any other man, made it imperative to have women to contact them, it was not much better in the Equatorial regions. Only here instead of being



too closely confined, they were given too much liberty, and not having any sense of morality, it became the duty of the missionaries to restrict their contacts. Furthermore, it was beyond the comprehension of the natives that a white man could be interested in a woman for the welfare of her soul and to reveal to her the great gifts of God. Were not the apostles themselves astonished when Our Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman?

Contacting the Native Woman

To take charge of the women and girls, to teach them their supernatural dignity and their eternal destiny became the lot of the White Sisters wherever they came to work on an ever widening field beside the White Fathers. The work required patience and incentive and complete faith in the grace of God that could wash the scarlet as white as snow. The native woman, suspicious of anything new, and ignorant of a disinterested sympathy, was attracted by curiosity and her confidence was gained by the services rendered to her.

Winning Their Friendship

Everything needed to be done to help these poor unfortunates. They had no idea of hygiene or of health, either for themselves or for their children; so the sisters went to their homes to teach them and opened dispensaries to which they might come. If the maternal instinct is strong in the native woman, so also, as everywhere else in the world, is her desire to dress up. The sisters profiting by their vanity gave them strips of material with colorful designs thereby giving them some sort of an idea of cleanliness and order. Even after dispensaries, hospitals, and workshops had been opened, there still remained a large gap to be filled — the school. Wholeheartedly the sisters applied themselves to the task. The little negro children gathered around them to learn to read and write and to acquire knowledge; they were the first of their race to do so.

Reaching Their True Dignity

Thus the White Sisters teaching truth and charity were able to speak to the women of Africa, also children of God — of His love for us by coming down on earth and of His most holy mother, Mary. They taught them to say the rosary, and by proclaiming the unique glory of Mary, they confirmed the dignity of woman, equal to man in the sight of God; and that in the home or in the

village they hold a place of importance, having responsibilities and rights. The woman of Africa is no longer a slave or a plaything. She has taken her rightful place as a child of God and of Mary.

With the Lepers

The traveler coming from Dakar first comes in contact with the White Sisters working among the lepers, at Bamako on the shores of the Niger River where, on the outskirts of the city, the government has founded a leper colony. The men, women and children who have been stricken with this terrible malady wait anxiously for the attentions and comfort the sisters can give them. Though the care of the lepers is not a specific end of the White Sisters, who can

measure the good they accomplish at Bamako. I saw them in the middle of these unfortunates, almost all of whom are Moslems, incapable of sharing the joy and fortitude of the sisters which is Our Lord Jesus Christ. I remember the beautiful flowers that the sisters coaxed into blooming along the veranda. While weeding and pruning they confided their secrets to them, asking that they tell Jesus in the tabernacle during the long hours when they would be alone with Him, of the love in their hearts and of the lepers who remain so cold and indifferent.

Communities Visited

At Bobo-Dioulasso I saw the community of White Sisters fairly seething with mission activity. The bustling village of pagans,

VISITING
THE
NATIVES
AT
HOME
IN
WEST
AFRICA

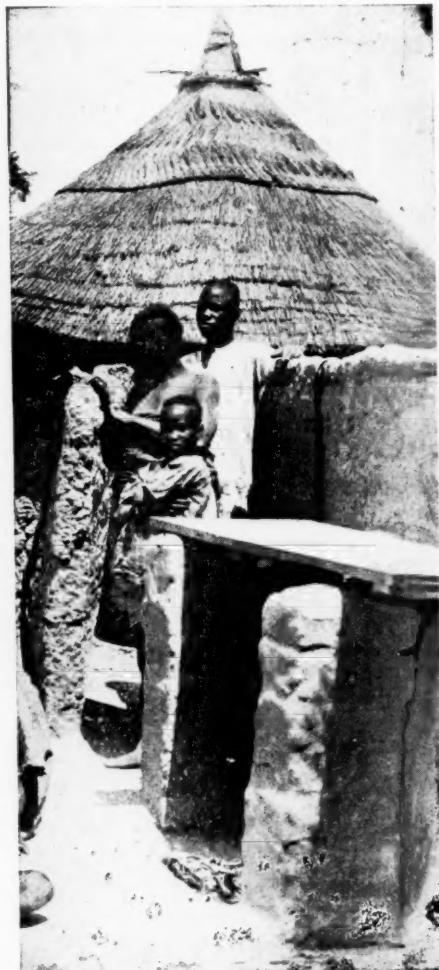


Moslems and Christians reminded one of the cities on the Mediterranean of long ago when Europeans and Orientals intermingled. The misery of the women never ceases to cry out in a crowded city in Africa. The sisters need only to walk among them to lift up and enlighten those swarming around them. By their mere presence they give comfort and hope.

At Ouagadougou, where the women know so well how to charm the visitor by their graciousness, one is edified on seeing the work accomplished by the sisters, especially among the weavers in the workshop they maintain for them.

Youth of the Church in Africa

Everywhere they work with the fervor of



a young community. How often one is aware of this fervor in the Springtime of the church in Africa — and already native religious have been formed. I have seen those young Negro sisters, full of life and devoted to the service of others. In the ophthalmic dispensary next to their little convent, they busy themselves around the doctor, a White Father, helping him to treat those who have diseases of the eyes.

These are just a few of the things I have seen but from them one can measure to some extent the degree of success already reached by the White Sisters in the task given them by Cardinal Lavigerie, namely, the regeneration of the African woman to her rightful heritage.

On June 16, 1939, the official paper of France stated that the validity of a native marriage required the consentment of the young girl, though formerly, whether the girl agreed to a given marriage or not was considered unimportant. Thus the betterment of the native woman was recognized, a cause for which the White Sisters have worked so hard. In a half a century they have contributed largely in making human dignity accessible to the native woman. They have started her on the road of her true vocation, that of wife and mother according to the law of Christ. And by the fulfillment of this vocation she becomes a missionary of the true faith among her own people, still held in such a large part in superstition and idolatry.

Rt. Rev. Msgr. Henri Chappoule,
National Director, Missionary
Union of the Clergy, France.

(Translated by:
Miss L. Liebentritt, Omaha, Neb.)

OBITUARY

Right Reverend Msgr. T. J. Devoy, Manchester, N. H.

Reverend Gauthier, W. F., Montreal

Sister Elisa-Marie, W. S., France

Sister M. St. Colomban, W. S., Tabora, Tanganyika

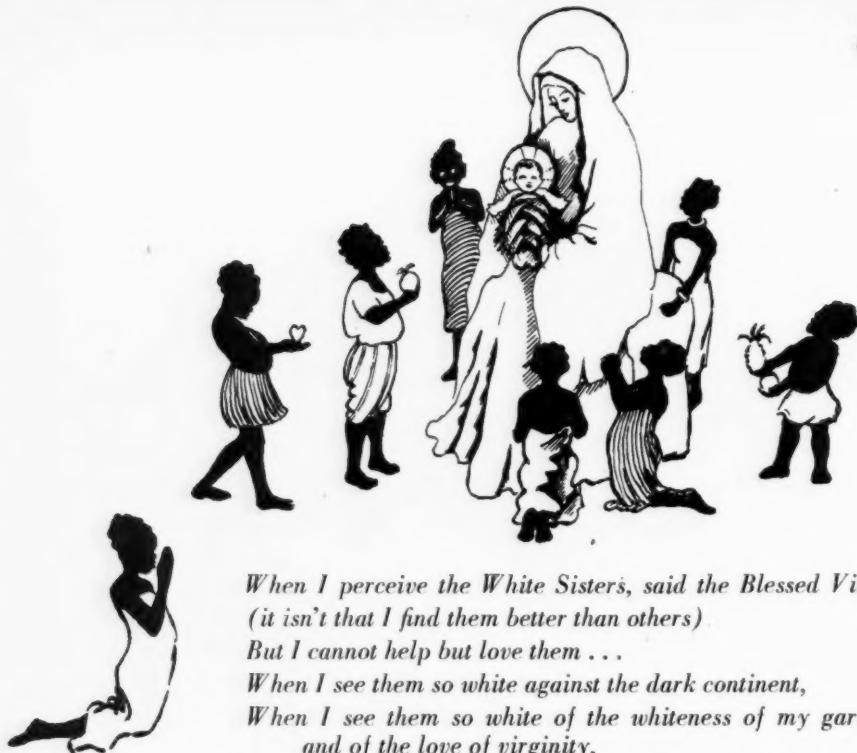
Sister M. Johanna, W. S., Ukerewe, Tanganyika

Dora Fairweather, Ireland

Mrs. Rose Boily, Manchester, N. H.

R. I. P.

Said the



*When I perceive the White Sisters, said the Blessed Virgin,
(it isn't that I find them better than others)*

But I cannot help but love them . . .

When I see them so white against the dark continent,

*When I see them so white of the whiteness of my garment
and of the love of virginity,*

*When I see them directed with truthfulness,
directed with simplicity*

*On the darkness of my kingdom, said the Queen of Africa,
I cannot help but love them.*

How could I ever forget them?

*I cradled them in the palm of my hand
through the tempest.*

*And he who contrived them,
he who formed them,
he who guided them,*

*The great Cardinal Lavigerie,
He also is my own.*



They know well how to constrain me.

*They know well when three times a day,
towards me*

*They lance their precious chains,
Beads linked with sighs of love
as the notes of a music divine,*

A chain of "Hail Marys,"

*They know there is nothing sweeter, said
the Blessed Virgin,
to my ears or to my heart,*

the Blessed Virgin . . .

*Entwined with the story of my joys, of my sorrows, of my glory . . .
Than the words of the angel,
And that nothing compares with this persevering prayer,
 this counterpoint in arabesque,
 this harmony of devotion,
When they recite the rosary and their fingers glide
 over the ivory beads,
They know well it obliges me, said the Blessed Virgin,
 And I?
I feel my heart melt with tenderness
And I cannot help but love them.*

*These are my children,
 Simple and humble and poor.
They come from everywhere and are of all sorts.
There are some who are poets, learned, clever,
Who sing beautifully and converse well,
And there are others that know nothing,
 but love (and that is better still.)
They are from all countries and speak all languages,
But they are all alike
 by the profound simplicity of their love.
They work in the same field
 and eat at the same table,
They sleep under the same roof
 and partake of the same Bread.*

*The capital virtue of apostles, said their founder,
 is obedience.
And it is on the rock of discipline,
On the foundation of the offering, total and complete of themselves
 that they build.
Oh, they have understood my "Ecce,"
And my Son and I, said the Blessed Virgin,
We love them thus, happy and free
 in what they have given.*

*When they come and place their joined hands between my hands,
 as slaves delivering themselves,
I no longer know by looking at them if these hands
 are really their hands,
So much they adhere to their world, slimy with misery and error,
So much they are blended as the leaven in the dough,
So much they are one with them as the seeds in the ground . . .*

(over)

*With the sharpness of pointed fingers,
 And the strength of folded hands,
 And the cutting of the Aves,
 They force open my heart to enter in,
 And they are never alone, these White Sisters;
 They lead pestilent lepers and students docile,
 And the feverish and the abandoned baby,
 And the little native sisters, black and pure,
 Beautiful as the madonnas of Chartes or Rocamadour,
 Madonnas sculptured in ebony by a divine chisel to my likeness,
 And the poor hard-headed Islamites,
 Who think they know it all, but who do not love,
 Same as I at Cana, saying to the servants without a quiver in my voice,
 And when they have all entered in,
 When they have placed them there, and have confided them to me,
 They are at peace, these White Sisters,
 "Do all that He will tell you."
 And when they die, said the Blessed Virgin,
 When they die, they reach their cherished goal,
 For I cannot restrain myself from taking them in my arms.
 It is so simple the death of a White Sister,
 Whether it be in the brushland,
 In the desert or under bombardment,
 Victim of typhus or of yellow fever,
 Or simply under the weight of many years,
 a White Sister who dies,
 It is as beautiful as the death of any other White Sister,
 Who has died with the peaceful smile
 of a soul who has fulfilled her task . . .
 And it is always while looking at me that they go,
 these White Sisters.
 No matter whether I see them at work,
 Or whether they are close to death,
 (it isn't that I find them better than others, said the Blessed Virgin)
 But I cannot help but love them.*

Mother Germaine-Marie

Like at Bethlehem

Mother M. Concordia Hoima, Uganda.

THE CHILDREN preparing to make their first Holy Communion at Christmas have the customary three days' retreat, not in silence, but to the sound of the tam-tam and Native flutes, like at Bethlehem in the days preceding the birth of Our Lord, and there will be some who will bear very close resemblance to the shepherds of old.

Once it happened that in my recommendations to the children, for this great day, I told them they should not come in their rags; they looked at me with questioning eyes wondering about their feast day attire. One little Native Postulant came to my rescue, in a short and clear sermon, explaining to the youngsters that I meant: "Go to the



river, wash your hands and feet, scrub them well and come back clean, otherwise the Infant Jesus will say: "What herd of calves or sheep is this that smells so bad!" This speech was most effective and our little ones deserved first prize for spotlessness.

We are getting ready Christmas gifts consisting of a medal or holy picture for which we are very grateful to you all, a few years back it was customary to add to this an article of clothing, but this has become impossible due to the high cost of living, even here in the jungle, with which our budget has not kept pace. The Infant Jesus was also very poor and He too suffered from cold! However here December and January are the hottest months of the year and instead of rubbing your hands to warm up, you must keep wiping perspiration!

ROYAL VISITOR

THE MUKAMA (KING) and the Katikiro have spent two months in England recently. (The Katikiro is a graduate of Yale.) This visit was arranged by the Colonial Office. On Sunday, the 20th of June, they returned to Hoima, and the next morning all the schools, Catholic and Protestant, turned out to welcome their Mukama. From our Catholic Mission there were the Primary Girls and the Secondary Girls, Primary Boys and Secondary Boys and students of the Vernacular Training Centre. We set out from here, the Scouts' band leading, all the boys followed, then the girls fell in behind. I accompanied our Secondary Girls. We went into the royal enclosure and the schools lined up on the lawn in front of the Mukama's house. He sat on the verandah, and the different schools, each in turn, sang their song of welcome. In between the songs the Mukama told me about his visit to England, or rather to Great Britain, which he enjoyed immensely. They did the usual sightseeing in London: House of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, the Tower, Buckingham Palace, etc. They went to visit Oxford and Cambridge, also Windsor Castle and Hampton Court. Bunyoro is a tobacco growing country, so they visited a tobacco factory at Bristol; cotton is also grown here, so they went to Manchester to see something of the cotton industry; they also visited Edinburgh. While in London they went to Heston to see Father Miller, W. F., who had been stationed here before he left for England about eighteen months ago. Of course they also saw our Sisters at Maryvale.

When all the songs were over, the Mukama spoke a few words to the assembled schools, and then we marched home.

Next morning Father Superior had a big surprise, there was a letter from the Mukama. The letter in itself was nothing new as the Mukama frequently writes to the Fathers or to the Sisters, and he appreciates what we

are doing for his people. The Mukama was asking to come to our Church for a special Thanksgiving service, for his safe journey. Now the Mukama professes to be a Protestant, but he does not hold with monogamy. He has often visited our Mission, but he has never come to Church before.

On Wednesday morning all the Catholic boys turned out again, led by their band, to meet the Mukama's car, the girls waited in Church and sang a rousing hymn in Runyoro as he entered the Church, escorted up the centre aisle by Father Superior and two altar boys in crimson soutanes, white surplices, chocolate heads and chocolate bare feet. The Mugo (his official wife) and the Katikiro came too. Solemn Benediction followed, during which the girls and boys sang their best in Latin and in Runyoro. After Benediction Father Superior addressed a few words to the congregation, and then all adjourned to the White Fathers' House, where morning tea was served to the Dignitaries.

During the tea interval I happened to be beside the Katikiro, and he too, told me about the visit, practically what the Mukama had already told me; but he added that he had been down in a coal mine, and had cut a lump of coal himself, this lump is now a precious souvenir; he has promised to lend it to us to show to our secondary girls. Here you go to the forest to cut your own fuel, or you pay a man thirty cents a bundle; and you don't press the switch for light, like the wise virgins you see that there is paraffin oil in your lamp and then you light it with a match!

Before the Mukama drove away he promised Father Superior to come soon again to give a talk to the girls and boys. He will relate some of his experiences and impressions of his visit to Britain.

Sr. Mary Brendan, W. S.
Hoima, Uganda.

A Telegram and a Cow

At 8:00 P.M. there was a knock at the door, when I answered, a tall, slender Native faced me, lance in hand, harassed with fatigue and weary looking. "Good evening," said he handing me a letter marked "Urgent."

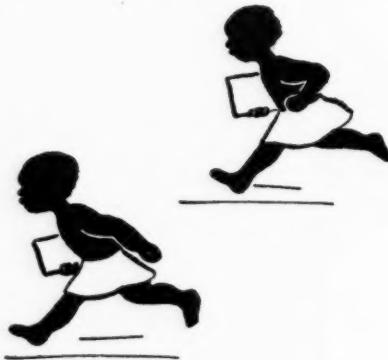
The writing was that of Reverend Mother Superior of the Bernardines at Kigali, some sixty miles from here. As our Mother Superior had left a few days before to go in that direction, I feared something had happened.

Happily there was nothing like it. Mother Maria wrote: "On Monday I received a telegram from your Superior, to be forwarded to you immediately, it asked that Sister H. meet her in Astrida the following Monday. (That was one hundred and forty-six miles away.) I quickly sent it on to you by the present bearer, but he never reached Zaza, I shall let him explain to you."

Crestfallen and in a contrite and humble voice he said:

— "I have made a mistake, but please forgive me?"

— "Surely," I said, "but first tell me what happened? Where are the other letters? Mother Superior sent you last Monday and you arrive today, Saturday? . . ."



— "Here is how it happened. When I left Kigali, I had orders to come quickly, so Tuesday I spent the night in a hut across the river, I had placed the mail near the mat on which I was sleeping and when I awoke in the morning I noticed a cow had eaten it."

So while we were still trying hard to get some means of transportation for Sister to reach Astrida on time for the appointment, I wondered if it ever dawned on Mother Superior that her telegram may have served to feed a Buganza cow?

Sister M. Veronique,
Zaza, Rwanda

FROM THE MAIL BAG

Dear Sister Prisca,

We are very happy to get your letter. We are also very proud of our little "Paul." Now we want a little "Genevieve."

We have gladly saved our pennies and are sending them to you. Some of us gave up candies, others movies and ice cream, so that we could get little Genevieve.

Sister read us your letter and pinned it on the blackboard in front of the room.

I gave up my Sunday movie so that I could put fifteen cents in the bank. It is fun to give up pennies for Jesus, it makes you feel good.

We will write to you again. We are glad to have your cousin teaching us. We all love her. Sister is kind to us. We would love to see you, too. We pray for you often, and hope to see you.

God bless you,

Your little friends of Mount Carmel School,
Leda Fidei, Grade V.

DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS IN 1948

Among those who sailed for Africa:

Sister M. Leonce (Miss J. DeJordy, Chicopee Falls, Mass.) for Algiers.

Sister M. Jacques de la Marche (Miss C. MacDonnell, New Glasgow, N. S.) via Algiers for Central Africa.

Sister M. Virginia-Marie (Miss G. Indelicato, Everett, Mass.) for Algiers.

Sister M. Exilda (Miss F. Mathieu, Lewiston, Me.) via Algiers for Central Africa.

Sister M. Pierre due Sauveur (Miss G. Richer, Manchester, N. H.) via Algiers for Central Africa.

And some who came back:

Sister M. Angele de Foligno (Miss I. Robichaud, Meteghan, N. S.)

Sister M. Mathias Kalemba (Miss A. Theroux, Leominster, Mass.)

Both have served more than fifteen years in Africa.

ATTENTION, GIRLS

Do you wish to become a Missionary in Africa?

Please inquire and register now at our Training Center, address:

Reverend Mother Superior
White Sisters' Convent
P. O. Box 7
Belleville, Illinois.

WILL

Our Legal Title Is

THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF AFRICA
METUCHEN, NEW JERSEY

Don't forget the missions in your WILL! You will never regret it, now nor later. Why not include this clause?

"I hereby bequeath to the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa for use in their African Missions, the sum of Dollars."



**We join OUR White Sisters
in grateful THANKS to YOU,
and prayerfully wish YOU
dear Benefactors and Readers
a Merry Christmas
and a New Year filled with Blessings.**

**P.S. May we count on you to fill up our Christmas Stocking again this
year? In advance, Thank You.**

We,

The Little Africans.



Dear Sister,

Enclosed please find \$ _____, my donation for
your little Africans.

Name _____

Address _____

